



NEWS RELEASE

WYOMING DISTRICT OFFICE

Release Date: April 30, 2007

Release Number: 07-18

Contact: Sharon Nichols (307) 261-6508

Internet Address: <http://www.sba.gov/wy>

Wyoming Contractors Association Named Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year 2007

Casper – The Wyoming District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has named Wyoming Contractors Association (WCA), Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year 2007. Steve Despain, District Director, will be presenting this award to Mr. Chris Corlis, Director, Wyoming Contractors Association, at the Casper Chamber's Annual Dinner to be held at the Parkway Plaza on May 7, 2007, at 5:30pm.

This award is given to an individual or entity who has fulfilled a commitment to advancing small business opportunities for veterans of the U.S. armed forces. Evaluation criteria includes active support for legislative or regulatory action designed to help small businesses; evidence of increased business opportunities for veterans as a result of the nominee's actions; advisory activities to improve awareness among veterans' groups of small business opportunities; advocacy of special consideration for veteran-owned small businesses in government policymaking; demonstrated accomplishment in obtaining support within the community for the establishment of veteran-owned small businesses and other accomplishments demonstrating the nominee's effective advocacy of veteran-owned small businesses. The President of the United States recognizes contributions of the small business community to the American economy and society by proclamation each year.

WCA was approached by employers in the Oil and Gas Industry who requested they put together a training program for workers interested in the industry. In January of 2005, they received a grant to train veterans that ran until the end of June 2006. They trained and placed 128 veterans at an average starting wage of \$20.62 per hour. WCA received an additional grant that started in July of 2006, to train more veterans and was one of the few grants that were funded again and it was due to their previous success. Since July of 2006, they have trained and placed 58 veterans with small and large employers in the Oil and Gas Industry. To do this veteran training WCA was able to get the support of the Oil and Gas Industry who contributed over 1.5 million dollars in equipment so the training could be provided. Initially the training was designed for the States of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota, but as of October, 2006, veterans from 44 states have been trained. This type of Regional Training under the Federal grant system was the first of its kind in the nation.

In addition to the Oil and Gas training, WCA provides training to the construction industry in welding, pipefitting and electrical and expects to broaden the available training to other occupations in the construction industry. WCA has trained 370 veterans since March of 2005.

- - -

For more information about SBA's programs for small businesses, call 307-261-6500 or TDY 307-261-6527 or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov/wy.

###